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Viewing cable 06BUENOSAIRES2122, ARGENTINA: TOP POLITICAL LEADERS FROM KEY PROVINCE

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Discussing cables

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BUENOSAIRES2122	2006-09-18 20:43	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1357063-eeuu-veia-una-oposicion-cercana-a-la-irrelevancia>

VZCZCXRO6554
PP RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHQU RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHBU #2122/01 2612043
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P 182043Z SEP 06
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5939
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHMFIASS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 002122

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STATE FOR WHA TOM SHANNON, JOHN MAISTO, AND CHARLES SHAPIRO
NSC FOR DAN FISK

TREASURY FOR DAS NANCY LEE
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2016

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: TOP POLITICAL LEADERS FROM KEY PROVINCE
ON POLITICS AND ECONOMY

REF: A. 02 BUENOS AIRES 02403
1B. BUENOS AIRES 00293

Classified By: CDA, a.i., Michael Matera, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On September 13, Charge and Poloff met with leading Peronist from Santa Fe province, Senator Carlos Reutemann, and Poloff met separately with leading candidate for Governor of Santa Fe, Socialist Hermes Binner. Reutemann said that Kirchner will continue to succeed politically as long as the economy remained strong. Reutemann noted President Kirchner's tendency to give one message in private and another in public, which he felt had damaged relations with the U.S. Socialist Congressman Hermes Binner highlighted Santa Fe's booming agricultural economy during a talk at the Club de la Union Nacional. Although Binner avoided discussion about political candidacies, Binner was critical of some of Kirchner's policies and his concentration of power. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) On September 13, Charge and Poloff met with leading Peronist from Santa Fe province, Senator Carlos Reutemann, and Poloff met separately with leading candidate for Governor of Santa Fe, Socialist Hermes Binner. Reutemann, who chairs the Argentine Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Charge that the Congress now has a very limited role in the political process. Asked about his committee, Reutemann replied, ""Foreign Ministry officials make their decisions personally, without consulting us. Of course, in reality, all of the decisions in this country are made by two or three people." Reutemann also said that the Peronist Party (PJ) was absent from the political system. ""There are a few people, such as (Salta Governor Carlos) Romero and (former Senator Ramon) Puerta that are trying to revive the PJ, but it will not amount to much. It is difficult to build anything without the national government's support because they control all of the resources.""

¶13. (SBU) Reutemann said that Kirchner will continue to succeed politically as long as the economy remained strong. Reutemann felt that the economy would continue to be good, at least until 2008, when problems could begin to develop. Reutemann thought that former Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna was the only opposition leader that stood a chance of competing with Kirchner in 2007, but said he thought that Kirchner would ultimately win reelection. Reutemann did not think that the GOA price controls would function in the long-run, but argued that Kirchner's principal objective is to ensure that the 2006 inflation figures are lower than the 2005 figures to enable Kirchner to argue that he is better able to control inflation than was Lavagna in his last year as Economy Minister. (Note: Lavagna was fired by Kirchner at the end of November 2005. End Note.)

¶14. (C) Reutemann noted President Kirchner's tendency to give one message in private and another in public, which he felt had damaged relations with the U.S. Reutemann argued that Kirchner's ""double-speak"" in Monterey, Mexico and poor performance in Mar del Plata had left a bad impression on President Bush. Reutemann indicated that he wished the political situation was different. ""I would have been a better President." (COMMENT: Carlos Reutemann, leading in presidential opinion polls in 2002, was former President Eduardo Duhalde's first choice to succeed him as President. Reutemann turned down Duhalde's offer reportedly because he did not want to compete against his former mentor Carlos Menem (See reftel A). More recently, Reutemann turned down President Kirchner's offer to be his candidate for Governor of Santa Fe in 2007. Reutemann protege and Congresswoman Maria del Carmen Alarcon told PolCouns and Poloff that

Reutemann does not want to run for Governor because of the potential that corruption he was involved in when he was previously Governor might come to light during the campaign. It is rumored that President Kirchner asked Reutemann to accompany him on his current trip to the U.S. in order to personally ask Reutemann to reconsider running for Governor. END COMMENT.)

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¶ 15. (SBU) Socialist Congressman Hermes Binner highlighted Santa Fe's booming agricultural economy during a talk at the Club de la Union Nacional. Binner noted that Santa Fe is Argentina's largest beef and milk exporter, accounting for 40 and 50 percent of the country's total, respectively. Binner said that the province's exports of grain has grown from a level of less than 4.8 billion dollars annually during the economic crisis to 7.7 billion dollars today. Binner called for a greater partnership between the government and the private sector to ensure that this economic growth continues.

¶ 16. (SBU) Although Binner avoided talk about political candidacies, Binner was critical of some of Kirchner's policies and his concentration of power. Binner deflected questions about his future political plans and that of his party, ""There is still a whole year to go before the elections, and people are fed up with politicians who, upon being elected, immediately begin campaigning for another job. We must honor those who voted us into office." Binner was highly critical, however, of the GOA ban on beef exports. ""We are lucky that soy is not consumed locally, or it would be banned too." Binner also criticized Kirchner's recent reform of the Council of Magistrates that gave the Casa Rosada more control over the Judiciary (See reftel B). Binner noted that other agricultural powerhouses like Australia and Canada developed booming economies while enjoying strong democracies.

¶ 17. (C) COMMENT: Carlos Reutemann and Hermes Binner are currently the two most important political figures in Argentina's fourth largest electoral district. Given Reutemann's unwillingness to run, it seems highly likely that Binner will win the gubernatorial elections next year, giving the political opposition an important success in what is otherwise likely to be a bleak electoral year. Also, coming from opposite sides of the political spectrum, their criticism of Kirchner's concentration of power is a clear reminder that Kirchner's authoritarian tendencies have earned him Peronist and non-Peronist critics. END COMMENT.

MATERA